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# PACIFIC COAST ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JAPANESE PROBLEM

The Answers to a Series of Questions Asked  
of 797 Citizens of the Pacific Coast States

Northern California . . .	167
Southern California . . .	310
Oregon . . . . .	136
Washington . . . . .	184

Interviewing Period: February 7, 1942 - February 13, 1942  
Date of Report: February 28, 1942

Study Planned and Summarized by the Polling Division,  
Bureau of Intelligence, OFFICE OF FACTS AND FIGURES,  
in Collaboration with the National Opinion Research  
Center of the University of Denver



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## Pacific Coast Attitudes Toward the Japanese Problem

Summary

- (1) Forty per cent of the Pacific Coast sample interviewed thought there were many disloyal aliens in their vicinity. But Californians and Oregonians were far more frequently of this opinion than residents of Washington. In all states, practically all who believed there were disloyal aliens around them named the Japanese specifically.
- (2) Three fourths of Southern Californians believe that "only a few" or "practically none" of the Japanese aliens in the state are loyal to the United States. In Oregon slightly more than half of all respondents believed that half or more of them were loyal.
- (3) Slightly more than half of the Southern Californians also felt that "practically all" or "most" of the Japanese aliens would "actually do something against the United States if they had a chance".
- (4) More than two-thirds of respondents in all three states believed Japanese aliens more dangerous than Germans or Italians.
- (5) Three-fourths of Southern Californians recommend segregating all Japanese aliens in camps. In Northern California less than half of the people favored this treatment. One third of the Southern Californians would also segregate Japanese who are citizens, but in the other three Pacific Coast areas no more than 14 per cent recommended this drastic action.
- (6) The F.B.I. was most frequently named as the agency which should handle the Japanese problem on the coast. Roughly one in four in all states thought their state government had been handling the problem "very well"; approximately the same number so appraised the local officials' handling of this problem; and 37 per cent thought the Federal Government had done "very well" in this respect. Southern Californians were most critical of all three governmental agencies.

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## Pacific Coast Attitudes Toward The Japanese Problem

### Discussion of Findings

A cross section of 797 citizens of the Pacific Coast States were asked a series of questions designed to have them evaluate the numerical size and seriousness of the Japanese problem in their vicinities, to comment on the efficacy with which the problem was being handled, and to recommend ways of dealing with the problem.

#### Size and Loyalty of Alien Population

The first impression from the interviewing results is that the intensity of suspicion toward aliens (and particularly Japanese aliens) varies in direct proportion to their numbers in the community.

Although 40 per cent of the total sample of adult citizens interviewed thought there were many disloyal enemy aliens in their vicinity, there were vast differences among the three coastal states on this score.\* Where just under

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\* Specific questions on which all results in this report are based are shown in the attached appendix.



half the Californians and Oregonians agreed that there were "many aliens around here who are not loyal to the United States", only one seventh of the persons in the state of Washington held this view.\*

In all states, however, practically all who felt there were disloyal aliens around named the Japanese, and they were named approximately twice as often as Germans. Oregonians and Southern Californians considered the German aliens considerably more of a menace than the Italians, from the standpoint of the number who were disloyal, but in Washington and in Northern California where the Italian population is larger, Italian aliens were cited as disloyal just as frequently as Germans.

Although the smallness of the sample makes it hazardous to rely very strongly on occupational breakdowns, it is interesting to note that in Washington the farmers led other groups in feeling that there were disloyal aliens around; in Oregon it was the laborers, and in California the professional

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* 1940 Census figures for aliens in California, Oregon, and Washington:	<u>California</u>	<u>Oregon</u>	<u>Washington</u>
Japanese	33,569	1,617	5,683
Germans	19,417	1,849	2,937
Italians	52,008	1,960	3,911





and white collar workers who leaned most heavily toward this feeling.\*

These occupational differences are interesting in the light of the variations which are apparent in terms of economic status of the respondent. In Washington, the prosperous are much less inclined to feel that there are disloyal aliens in the vicinity than are those of "average" or "poor" status. In Oregon, on the other hand, the prosperous are the most alarmed; those in the average group, the least; while in California the poor people are most likely, and those in the average group again least likely to think there are disloyal aliens around them.

Although educational difference was not a significant variable in California, in Washington the better educated are less inclined to believe there are many disloyal aliens in their vicinity, and in Oregon there is a slight tendency for the reverse to be true.

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\* The size of the sample in this study is such that too strong reliance on any of the more detailed breakdowns reported herein is inadvisable. They are included as possible guides for more extensive research, rather than as definitive findings.

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There is also a tendency for older persons to name the Japanese as disloyal aliens more frequently than do the younger population, and this tendency is most pronounced in California, where those over 40 are about 10 per cent higher than those under 40 in thinking there are disloyal aliens about.

Estimates  
of Size of  
Japanese  
Alien  
Population

Asked to estimate the number of Japanese aliens in their state, one fourth of the Californians and Oregonians, and 15 per cent of the Washingtonians overestimated. In all three states there is little relationship between overestimating the size of the alien population and the general feeling that disloyal aliens exist in the vicinity. This fact, taken in conjunction with the finding that the larger the actual number of Japanese aliens in the community, the more inclined the people are to believe there are many disloyal aliens around them, perhaps shows that the important factor is the general impression of the relative size of the alien population rather than any exact estimate of their numbers.

This result, plus the fact that the interviewers on the spot reported a great deal of difficulty in getting respondents to hazard guesses on their population figures, and a corresponding feeling that what figures were finally elicited were generally meaningless, made it seem inadvisable to rely on them for breakdowns or cross tabulations.





Estimate  
of the  
number of  
disloyal  
Japanese  
aliens

Three-fourths of Southern Californians declared that  
"only a few" or "practically none" of the Japanese aliens in  
the state are loyal to the United States. Oregonians were  
most charitable in this respect, with 41 per cent holding  
these extreme views. Forty-four per cent of Northern  
Californians and 50 per cent of Washingtonians expressed  
this attitude.

Among persons in all states who believed "most"  
or "practically all" Japanese aliens were loyal, the number  
of persons under 40 years of age was higher than the number  
over 40. And women tended to be less suspicious than men  
of the loyalty of the Japanese aliens.

In California the majority opinion on all economic  
levels was that only a few or practically none of the  
Japanese aliens are loyal. In Oregon, on the other hand,  
a slight majority of all economic levels believed that half  
or more of them are loyal. In Washington a majority of the  
prosperous felt that half or more were loyal, the poor were  
about evenly divided on the question, and those of average  
income were definitely inclined to believe that only a few  
or practically none of them were loyal.

The better educated in all three states are more  
inclined to feel that half or more of the Japanese aliens  
are loyal than are the less educated.



In Oregon and California, respondents both of whose parents were born abroad were more inclined than other groups to feel that at least half of the Japanese aliens were loyal. This situation was reversed in Washington.

Belief that  
Japanese  
would take  
overt action  
against U.S.

Southern Californians, who led in believing that most Japanese aliens were disloyal, were also consistent in feeling more strongly than others that these aliens would "actually do something against the United States if they had a chance." (57% said "practically all" or "most of them" would do something). Residents of Washington were least suspicious of the Japanese aliens on this count.

The better educated, consistent with inclination to be less critical of Japanese loyalty remarked earlier, are least inclined to believe that many of the Japanese aliens will take action against the United States.

Comparative  
threats of  
Japanese,  
German, and  
Italian  
aliens

Seven of every ten respondents in all areas but Northern California believed the Japanese were "most dangerous" as compared with German and Italian alien groups.<sup>3</sup> Roughly two-thirds of Northern Californians expressed the same view, but this area had a larger number of "Don't knows".





Although persons in all economic levels on the Pacific Coast tend generally to consider the Japanese aliens more dangerous than either the Italians or the Germans, the prosperous people in California are more suspicious of German aliens than are the other economic levels.

Treatment  
of Japanese  
aliens

About three-fourths of Southern Californians recommend segregating all Japanese aliens in Camps, when they are given a chance to select one of four prescribed treatments. Only 5 per cent would "treat them as individual cases and not do anything to them unless there were grounds to suspect their loyalty."

In Oregon 56 per cent, in Washington 50 per cent, and in Northern California 44 per cent would segregate them. Northern Californians, however, led all the others in recommending that Japanese aliens be barred from places and jobs where they might be dangerous. People of Washington led in recommending the mildest treatment -- "Just treat them as individual cases". (15%)

Treatment  
of Japanese  
who are  
citizens

One-third of the Southern Californians would segregate in Camps all Japanese who are citizens of the United States. But in the other areas no more than 14 per cent recommended this drastic action. Roughly one-fourth of respondents in all areas, however, felt that even these citizens should be made to report regularly to the police, and should be barred from places and jobs



where they might be dangerous. In Washington and Northern California half the people would treat such citizens as individual cases. In Oregon 38 per cent held this latter view, and in Southern California 24 per cent.

Generally speaking, women are more inclined than men to recommend the more lenient treatment for Japanese who are citizens. Those under 40 also tend to be more lenient in their recommendations than the older group.

In California, the prosperous tend to recommend segregation more frequently than those of average or poor economic status. And in all three states the prosperous want to "bar such citizens from places and jobs where they might be dangerous" more often than the other economic groups.

Official  
Agency  
To Handle  
the Problem

The F.B.I. was named most frequently by all respondents as the agency which should have charge of dealing with the Japanese alien problem. From 42 per cent (Southern California) to 63 per cent (Washington) felt this way. The Army was the second most frequently recommended agency. In Oregon and Southern California the State Police were in third place among agencies desired to handle the problem, but in Washington and Northern California the Local Police were more highly thought of for the job than the State Police. In no place were more than 3 per cent in favor of having the Navy perform the task.





Those most critical of the way the Federal Government has handled the problem to date -- (those who say it has handled it "poorly") are only slightly less enthusiastic than those who think the Federal Government has handled it "very well" about having the F.B.I. in charge of the problem. More of the former think the Army ought to be in charge, but even so the F.B.I. has 46 per cent of the votes among the most critical, to 38 per cent for the Army.

There is a natural tendency for those who feel that the State Government or the County or Local officials have handled the problem poorly to be less inclined to favor entrusting the job to the state police or the local police.

Impression  
of How Well  
Problem Has  
Been Handled

Roughly one in four in all states thought their State Governments had handled the problem "very well"; approximately the same number so appraised their local officials' handling of the problem; and 37 per cent thought the Federal Government had done "very well" in this respect.

Southern Californians were more critical of the way the Japanese alien problem had been handled by Federal, State, and Local officials than any of the other groups. They are twice as critical of the Federal Government, and slightly less than twice as critical of State and Local officials in terms of the number who say the problem has



been handled "poorly". Oregonians were least critical. Generally, however, respondents were less critical of the Federal Government than of the State or Local officials.





## A P P E N D I X

Questions on which results in the foregoing were obtained.

1. Would you say there are many aliens around here -- that is people who are not citizens -- who are not loyal to the United States?  
  
(If "Yes") What nationalities are they?
2. In this state, about how many Japanese do you think there are who are not citizens? -- Just your best guess.
3. About how many of these Japanese aliens would you say are loyal to the United States?
  - a. Practically all of them
  - b. Most of them
  - c. About half of them
  - d. Only a few of them
  - e. Practically none of them
4. Taking all the Japanese aliens in this state as a whole, about how many of them would you say would actually do anything against the United States if they had a chance?
  - a. Practically all of them
  - b. Most of them
  - c. About half of them
  - d. Only a few of them
  - e. Practically none of them
5. Which of these alien groups do you think is the most dangerous; Japanese, Germans, or Italians?
6. Taking all the Japanese aliens around here as a whole, which of these statements comes closest to the way you feel we ought to treat them?
  - A. Put them all together in camps some place where they can be closely watched.
  - B. Make them report to the police regularly and bar them from places and jobs where they might be dangerous.
  - C. Bar them from places and jobs where they might be dangerous, but otherwise let them alone.
  - D. Just treat them as individual cases, and don't do anything to them unless there are grounds to suspect their loyalty.



7. Who do you think should have charge of this -- the Army, the F.B.I. (G Men), the State Police, the Navy, or the Local Police?
8. (Unless "Don't Know" to 6) Do you think that (respondent's choice to 6) is the best possible thing to do to them, or can you think of a better way of handling them?
9. Which of those same things (in question 6) comes closest to the way you feel we ought to treat the Japanese here who are citizens of the United States?
10. How do you feel about the way the Federal Government has been handling the problem of the Japanese aliens around here -- Do you think it has handled this problem very well, only fairly well, or poorly?
11. How do you feel about the way the State Government has been handling the problem of the Japanese aliens around here -- Do you think it has handled this problem very well, only fairly well, or poorly?
12. How do you feel about the way the County and Local officials have been handling the problem of the Japanese aliens around here -- Do you think they have handled this problem very well, only fairly well, or poorly?

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